

Washington, DC — Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) together with Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher (D-Calif.), Congressman Sam Farr (D-Calif.), and Aimée Houghton from the Center for Public Environmental Oversight today announced the release of the inventory of Department of Defense (DoD) sites nationwide with known or suspected unexploded ordnance (UXO). UXO is the high-explosive military munitions that failed to explode when fired or dropped or which were buried for disposal. At a press conference today, Blumenauer argued for increased funding for clean up of these dangerous sites and against efforts in Congress to exempt the DoD from environmental laws.

“Dangerous unexploded ordnance, which can kill our military personnel and civilians alike, is NOT a remote danger in some far off land,” said Blumenauer. “Everyday in America, in every state, Americans are at risk from explosives of shells, bombs and of the more subtle, but no less deadly, pollution from military toxins. The first critical step towards dealing with two centuries of dangerous, and in some cases even forgotten, activities of the Department of Defense is to complete the inventory and share the information with the public.”

Within the United States, millions of acres of land and waterways are contaminated with UXO. Sites containing UXO exist in every state and nearly every Congressional district. With the growth of urbanized areas across the country, many of these contaminated sites are now located within or near housing developments, schools parks and other public lands. In the Washington, DC area for example, the Spring Valley neighborhood near American University is still contaminated with chemical weapons developed and tested there during World War I. In a tragic example, two young boys were killed near the San Diego subdivision of Tierrasanta in 1983 when UXO they discovered exploded.

The inventory's release was required by a law, sponsored by Blumenauer and passed by Congress in 2001 as language included in the Fiscal Year 2002 Department of Defense Authorization bill. The inventory for the first time gives the public accurate information about where these sites are located and rank the sites by environmental and public health hazard.

Blumenauer has been a longtime champion of the cleanup of UXO and military toxics, arguing that Congress and the Department of Defense have been too slow in responding to this enormous problem. “For too long, Congress has been missing in action on UXO cleanup and the Department of Defense has been too conservative in its funding requests.” At current funding levels, it would take up to 146 years for the administration to clean up only those sites classified as “formerly used defense sites.” “In reality,” Blumenauer stated, “it will take hundreds of years more without focused attention and resources now.”

Blumenauer also noted the importance of the inventory in light of the administration's request to exempt the DoD from environmental laws.

For a complete inventory of UXO sites go to <https://www.denix.osd.mil/> .